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## **Group studies Grand traffic; Expansion project begins in 2009**

**By Zach Colick, Independent Newspapers**

Arizona Department of Transportation officials began, in the past few weeks, studying ideas for phase two of the Grand Avenue improvement project.

The Maricopa County Department of Transportation and local representatives also are involved in discussions where monies from the \$64 million project, with plans to begin in 2011 and finish in 2015, will be allocated for Grand Avenue improvements from Loop 101 to Loop 303.

The feasibility study will research several ways to help improve traffic flow in some of the more heavily congested intersections along Grand Avenue in Sun City, where residents have expressed concern crossing to their intended destinations.

**Sun City Home Owners Association Director Gary Bourne, chairman of the transportation committee, believes grade separations along Grand Avenue will be positive for the many residents who cross the busy intersection.** Independent Newspapers/ Zach Colick

The possible implementation of grade separations — underpasses or overpasses — along Grand Avenue at 103rd and 107th avenues is being hashed out by ADOT officials, said Diane D'Angelo, ADOT spokeswoman.

Oft-traveled intersections in Sun City West, including Grand Avenue and Bell Road as well as Meeker Boulevard and Reems Road, have also been mentioned in talks for possible grade separations.

However, Ms. D'Angelo noted discussions are still in their infancy and it is too early to tell when possible improvements along Grand Avenue, besides widening it to three lanes in both directions, may begin.

She added grade separations have a “good chance” of being implemented sometime during phase two.

“These things take time. We want to ensure everyone with a place at the table has their concerns and preferences addressed,” she said. “Grade separations are the top priority in Sun City and certainly we will be looking very seriously about how to achieve that goal.”

As part of a Valley-wide program of improvements, the Grand Avenue widening project would create a continuous six-lane arterial road by 2010. Work is expected to begin sometime in 2009.

This stretch of Grand Avenue connects several West Valley communities, including Sun City, Sun City West, Sun City Grand, El Mirage, Youngtown and Peoria.

Total cost for the project is estimated at \$15.8 million, with funds coming from a half-cent sales tax authorized by Maricopa County voters with the passage of Proposition 400 in November 2004.

Additional left-hand turn lanes, pedestrian waiting areas and push buttons in medians to prompt a signal change will also be part of the expansion design.

Residents who have a vested interest in the expansion project provided their two cents.

Sun City Home Owners Association officials have said publicly they are a group representing the community's best interests in the Grand Avenue widening project.

Gary Bourne, chairman of SCHOA's transportation committee, said a number of residents cross Grand Avenue by foot, wheelchair, bicycle or scooter for errands as well as visiting recreation centers or Sun Health Boswell Memorial Hospital, 10401 W. Thunderbird Blvd.

However, he said the once quiet West Valley has sprawled into a giant megalopolis, creating a sense of fear and anxiety for many who want to cross the intersection, but believe it is not safe due to speeding motorists.

Mr. Bourne is in regular contact with ADOT and MCDOT officials, who often are guests at his monthly transportation committee meetings, which take place 10 a.m. the third Tuesday of every month at SCHOA, 10401 W. Coggins Drive.

In November 2006, ADOT representatives visited the Mountain View Recreation Center, 9749 N. 107th Ave., and emphasized the need for roadway expansion with the high volume of traffic traveling daily on Grand Avenue and Valley population continuing to soar.

Matt Burdick, ADOT spokesman, said 40,500 vehicles travel this stretch of Grand Avenue daily and that number is expected to jump to 57,100 by 2025.

He also noted 3.7 million people reside in metropolitan Phoenix and that number is expected to soar to 5.7 million by 2025.

Ms. D'Angelo said the feasibility study workgroup was formed out of necessity for the entire Grand Avenue widening project and not for specific, individual projects during different phases of design.

She encourages residents to visit the ADOT Web site, [www.azdot.gov](http://www.azdot.gov), and click on the Valley Freeway link for more information about the entirety of the Grand Avenue project. Public comments are also sought on the Web site.

Additionally, she encourages residents to peruse the Maricopa Association of Governments Web site, [www.mag.maricopa.gov](http://www.mag.maricopa.gov), to become familiar with the Regional Transportation Plan.

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